



UMBC

**House Ways & Means Committee
House Bill 685
Economic Development - Maryland Aerospace and Technology Commission
February 15, 2024
Letter of Support with Amendments**

Chair Atterbeary, Vice Chair Wilkins, and members of the committee, thank you for the opportunity to offer testimony of Favorable with Amendments on House Bill 685.

UMBC is a dynamic public research university integrating teaching, research and service to benefit the citizens of Maryland. As an Honors University, the campus offers academically talented students a strong undergraduate liberal arts foundation that prepares them for graduate and professional study, entry into the workforce, and community service and leadership. UMBC has over 14,000 students, in both undergraduate and graduate programs, representing Marylanders throughout the state.

UMBC has a long relationship with NASA, with ongoing work over the last 25 years. This work includes UMBC's Goddard Earth Sciences Technology & Research Center (GESTAR II), Earth & Space Institute (ESI), Goddard Planetary Heliophysics Institute (GPHI), and our Center for Space Sciences and Technology (CSST). This work, which included a rocket launch last week on a PACE mission to study Plankton, Aerosol, Cloud, and Ocean Ecosystem. UMBC's HARP2 Polarimeter will collect global data on aerosols and clouds. Overall, UMBC is currently ranked as the #16 academic institution in the country in receiving NASA funding.

House Bill 685 takes an important step in creating a Maryland Aerospace and Technology Commission to ensure that Maryland maximizes the economic development opportunities that have developed at UMBC, Johns Hopkins University, and University of Maryland, College Park due to our strong partnerships with NASA. A strategic plan for the promotion of space, aeronautics, and aviation economic development can pay long-term benefits to Maryland's economy, and ensure a long-term competitive edge for the state.

As a leader in NASA funding, and a long-time partner of NASA, UMBC would request to be amended into the legislation in Section 10-1103 to serve on the Board of Directors of the Commission together with our already named academic partners. Including UMBC would include the only Public R1 University in the Baltimore region, and would ensure that the relationships and insight from our leaders can be to Maryland's benefit.

With this amendment, we urge a Favorable Report on House Bill 685.